

What is the Foundation for the NIH (FNIH)?

The [FNIH](#) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit charitable organization, chartered by the U.S. Congress, that raises private funds and cultivates public-private partnerships in support of the mission of the NIH.

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How does FNIH work with NIH?

When NIH considers a specific collaboration to advance NIH's mission, the FNIH can work as a partner to establish and manage that collaboration. The FNIH supports a range of activities, including research partnerships, scientific education and training programs and scientific conferences and events. When necessary, the FNIH can facilitate the exchange of ideas between NIH and private partners, involving other federal agencies, such as the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), as appropriate, in a pre-or non-competitive environment that may not be possible otherwise.

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What is the process to establish a collaboration with FNIH?

For collaborations initiated by NIH staff, the steps of the process include:

1. Completing a Request for Collaboration (RFC) form. To obtain the form, please email SciencePolicy@od.nih.gov . Note that there are two versions of the form: a standard collaboration form as well as a form for one-time events (e.g., scientific workshop). The information required to complete either form includes the purpose and goals of the project, how it aligns with NIH's mission, the roles that NIH and FNIH will play, a timeline and milestones for the project, a detailed budget, and names of potential partner organizations or individuals. The IC director from the submitting IC must sign the RFC to indicate their approval of the proposed collaboration.
2. Submitting the completed RFC form to the liaison. Initial NIH review of the RFC will be conducted by a small committee within the Office of Science Policy (OSP). The review

criteria this group uses include whether the project or activity is consistent with NIH's mission; leverages resources across multiple sectors; and is well defined, with milestones, a clear budget, and a timeline for completion.

3. Initial evaluation of the RFC is followed by a second-level review by the NIH-FNIH Steering Committee. The Steering Committee is comprised of three Institute and Center directors, the Deputy Director of the Office of Intramural Research, representatives from the HHS Office of General Counsel (OGC), and the NIH Associate Director for Science Policy. The Steering Committee may request further information or clarification from the submitting IC.

4. If the Steering Committee approves a proposal, then it is sent to the FNIH for its consideration. The FNIH will then perform its own review of the collaboration request, including formal assessment of the likelihood of securing funding, and its Board of Directors will determine whether to approve the collaboration. If the RFC is approved, a project is generally then documented in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the FNIH and NIH or, for events, an Event Collaboration Agreement.

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How long does the approval process take?

For the steps of the review process under NIH's purview, allow 4-8 weeks. The FNIH's review will take additional time and often begins with a discussion with the submitting IC to clarify project and budget details before the funding assessment is performed. To include enough time for the full NIH and FNIH review and approval process, as well as enough time for the FNIH to then raise funds to support particular objectives, it is recommended to submit the RFC at least 9-12 months in advance of the date funds will be needed. Note that once the approval process is complete, fundraising for very large and/or complex collaborations may take a year or more.

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What are some tips to consider when completing the RFC form?

Each potential collaboration is different, but some general points to keep in mind:

- Consider what type of governance structure may be best suited for the collaboration. Will the project be managed primarily by NIH or the FNIH? What are the roles and responsibilities of the partners, including whether the partners will be involved in strategic and technical decision making for the collaboration (to the extent appropriate and allowable by law)? Is an Executive Board or Scientific Committee necessary?
- Clearly outline NIH's role in the collaboration as well as the role you hope the FNIH can play.
- Articulate why the project is important (not just to scientists, but to the public).
- Consider data and publication policies, including how and when any data developed through the project will be made publicly available.
- Develop a proposed budget as completely as possible. Articulate what can/will be achieved with the additional funding you are asking the FNIH to raise for the project or collaboration.

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Does a specific partner need to be identified prior to applying?

Identifying potential partners prior to completing the RFC is helpful, but not required. Each potential collaboration is different; some may have obvious partners based on current collaborative activities, whereas others may venture into new territory. In considering potential partners, it is important that NIH employees abide by NIH policies including the NIH Policy Manual Chapter on Gift Administration that prohibits NIH employees from soliciting donations of funds or other resources intended to support its activities. Please reach out to NIH's liaison to the FNIH with additional questions.

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Does FNIH select a certain number of projects each year? Are there particular types of projects that are more successful than others?

The FNIH does not have a pool of funds that it distributes each year; rather, the organization must raise funds on a per-project basis. This makes the identification of non-Federal sponsors particularly important to this process. Because the decision to move forward with a project depends in large part on finding support from outside (non-NIH) partners, there are not necessarily particular types of projects or disease areas that are

more likely to be approved for collaboration than others.

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How does the funding work? How does NIH access the funds, once the FNIH has raised them?

Because of its unique relationship with NIH as provided in its governing statute, the FNIH is able to transfer funds it raises to NIH. Traditionally, NIH has accepted such funds pursuant to its gift acceptance authority whereby the funds are directed to each IC's gift fund and typically targeted to support a particular activity or program. The collaboration is often further governed by and described in an MOU between NIH and the FNIH. Once transferred to NIH, the funds may be used intramurally or extramurally, subject to any conditions on the use of the funds and in accordance with normal NIH policies, procedures, and funding mechanisms. All normal federal laws, regulations, and policies apply to their use. The FNIH can also expend funds independently. The FNIH has its own scientific administrative staff, and it can issue Requests for Applications and fund scientific grants and contracts directly or in parallel with NIH funding streams; it can also pay vendors (caterers, printers, research organizations etc.) directly.

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Does the FNIH charge a fee for its services?

No. The FNIH must, however, cover its own operating costs and thus includes its direct and indirect expenses in the overall cost of each project it takes on. These costs are included in the amount that the FNIH seeks to raise from non-NIH sponsors for a particular project. The calculation of direct and indirect costs varies by project; for projects that require a higher degree of FNIH involvement in fundraising and management, the FNIH's costs are higher.

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Where can I find examples of NIH-FNIH collaborations?

Examples of previous NIH-FNIH collaborations may be found [here](#).

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